



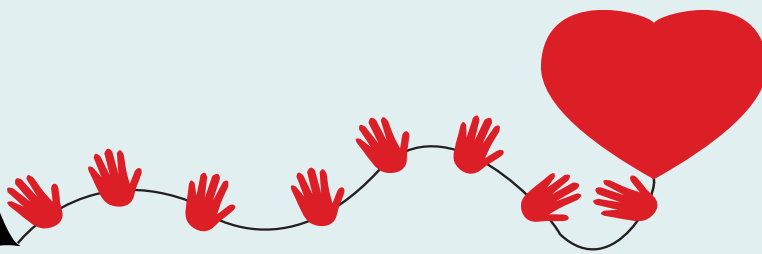
# Maricopa County CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocate Program Newsletter

Volume 5, Issue 1

[www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/juvenile/casa/Casa.html](http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/juvenile/casa/Casa.html)

February/March 2002



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*Judge Maurice Portley*

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Mar. 15, 16** – State Orientation Training, 1501 West Washington Phoenix, Az.

**Mar. 21** – Post Orientation, Durango Facility, Phoenix.

**March 25, 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.** – Brown Bag with Judge Linda Scott, Southeast Facility, The Yucca Room, Mesa.

**April 6 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.** – Annual CASA "Light of Hope" Event, Patriot's Park, Phoenix.

**April 18 6 p.m. – 9 p.m.** – Case Selection Meeting Room 223, Durango Phoenix.

**April 20 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.** – Annual CASA Volunteer Recognition Banquet ASU Downtown Center, Phoenix.

**April 27-30** – National CASA Conference, San Diego, CA. Call CASA office or visit [www.casanet.org](http://www.casanet.org) for more information.

**Please RSVP to our main office for all events:**  
**602.506.4083**

## Family finds room in home, hearts

**By K.C. Gill**  
*CASA Volunteer*

When the children's fifth Case Manager in little over a year informed me that she was working on scheduling a Family Group Decision Making session, I was not hopeful there would be enough participants to warrant one. This case was over two years old and there had been little participation by family members during that time to assist with the six children, currently ages 9-16. They came into state's custody when both parents were incarcerated in prison for drug related violations. The children are currently separated in three placements.

Although the Case Plan has always been Family Reunification, it has become apparent over time that the parents are not able or willing to follow the necessary steps in order to regain custody of their children. The meeting was held as Child Protective Services felt that it is now time for permanency for these children, who no longer can wait for parents

### Family Group Decision: Steps toward permanency

**By Stacey Beebe**  
*CASA Volunteer*

Family Group Decision Making is a tool to increase relative adoptions and guardianship for children in the foster care system. The program targets children who are coming into the dependency system with no placement identified, children who have a legal plan of adoption with no identified placement, and children in foster care for at least 5 years who are not candidates

for independent living.

A Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) meeting attempts to involve family, extended family, friends and community to become more involved in the child's life, and to assist with locating a permanent placement.

Numerous questions arise in deciding to hold a meeting of this kind. A crucial question is if the family "agreed to have a

**Continued Page 5**

that may or may not ever become responsible enough to care for them.

The children have been very fortunate that the grandmother of one of their older half sisters has always been their grandmother figure as well. Over the course of their lifetime, this woman has been the one to take the children in whenever their parents were unable or unwilling to care for them. Initially, she had all six children

living with her, but was forced to ask CPS for help with some of them due to their aggressive and out of control behaviors. Currently she has custody of the two youngest girls, but due to health concerns, has requested that CPS look for another placement.

The Family Group Decision Making meeting was a little slow getting underway, as

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**Q&A from Judge Linda Scott**  
*Presiding Juvenile Court Judge*

**Q** Bill Oldham is concerned that foster homes, group homes and other placements may manipulate CASA visits as a form of discipline.

"I feel that the CASAs' visits, like those with the therapist, counselor, case manager, siblings and parents

are all important parts of a whole...a program for the betterment of the child," he said. "To deny a CASA's off-site visit as part of a punishment is not fitting, in my opinion. I believe strongly that my visits are much more



successful when not in the group home, where others are around and where the atmosphere is not conducive to relaxed and private conversations. The CASA's right of access to the child is provided by the Order of Appointment grants. Your response is much appreciated.

**A** As a general principle the Juvenile Court Judges

**Continued Page 5**

## CASA study: Program highly effective

**Linda Wright** Program Manager, Arizona CASA Program

As many of you are aware, over the past 18 months the Arizona CASA Program has contracted with the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) to conduct an Effectiveness Study. The cases selected for this study were taken from five county sites, with Maricopa County being a critical part of the study because of the number of children who are wards of the court.

First and foremost, the

study shows that you as CASA volunteers need to be commended on your commitment and dedication to the children you serve. I would like to highlight eight of the 17 findings found in the report.

- CASA volunteers were assigned more complex cases than those in the general population of dependent children.

- In Maricopa County, CASA-assigned cases had a substantially higher average

number of prior CPS investigations. (This reinforces the previous finding that CASA volunteers are assigned to more complex cases.)

- Children assigned CASA volunteers displayed a wide range of problems, including emotional/mental health issues, serious medical problems, developmental delays, academic problems, and prenatal and/or infant health problems.

- The vast majority of volunteers (85%) remained assigned to their cases through the time the court made a

permanency determination.

- CASA volunteers contacted their assigned children an average of 1.2 times per month, and contacted other key parties an average of 5.3 times per month. However, documentation of contacts in contact logs was inconsistent.

- Volunteer advocates submitted an average of slightly more than two written reports to the court during the time frame of the study.

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### Family, From Page 1

the facilitator was determined to get the father to the meeting. The facilitator called the father and told him his family was waiting for him and she would send a cab. He then agreed to come to the meeting. One of the family members had become angry at the process and chose to leave before the father arrived, but the others stayed. Since the meeting was delayed until the father arrived, there was an awkward period of time before the facilitator could actually start the family on reviewing the strengths and concerns of the children and the family. However, once the process started in earnest, the family was quite open about sharing their concerns regarding the children.

As the children were part of the meeting, they were able to hear their family's concerns, and for the first time, take part in the decisions about where they were to live. Although one of the children ran out of the family meeting when she became upset over things that were said and refused to come back in, the others continued their task. What a surprise it was for me to hear that the children's paternal half brothers and their wives were

each willing to care for one of the boys! They had never previously been considered as guardians for any of the children. Neither had been raised with these children, as they were from the father's previous marriage and had lived with their mother. Two maternal half sisters were each willing to care for one of the girls. CPS agreed to see that Family Preservation services are made available to them. A maternal aunt agreed to care for one child who is currently in Juvenile Detention awaiting transfer to a residential treatment center due to drug dependency issues. She will take custody once the child finishes the treatment program.

The oldest child chose to remain in his group home as he feels he is doing well there and wants to participate in the Independent Living Program. However, as a backup plan, one of the half brothers agreed to take him should he change his mind. Two aunts agreed to be backup should the placements with the half sisters not work out as planned. If the other placements do not work out, the family agreed they would meet again and decide on an alternate plan, so the children would still remain with a member of the family.

The family was in agreement that the father could visit the children as long he gave the guardian 24 hours notice and that he restarts random drug and alcohol urinalysis testing. He is also to restart the parent aide sessions. The children's mother will be required to do the same once she is released from prison should she wish to visit the children. Initially, however, she will be required to have supervised visitation and it will be based on recommendations from the counselors who treat the children.

The family decided that visits between the children could occur anytime the family gathers, but they intend to try to maintain at least one monthly time that they will all come together.

When the children in the group home were informed of the Family Group Decision Making meeting, their first reaction was, "Why bother? No one wants us." They found out differently! Their family does indeed care what happens to them and were able to formulate a viable plan to care for each of the children. They were not only willing to say they would take responsibility for one of the children, but were willing to go through a background check

and home study in order to be approved as a permanent guardian. They were informed of the problems these children have with anger management and discipline and still said, "Yes, I'll take him" and "Yes, I'll take her." It was such a good feeling to have participated in this meeting, to hear the results, and to see the children's faces when the decisions were being read.

I visited the child in Juvenile Detention the next day and reviewed the family decisions with her since she had been unable to attend the meeting. She has not seen her aunt in a long time, but the fact that a member of her family was willing to take her, and that the others siblings had family members willing to take them, was almost unbelievable to her. She was very happy and excited over the prospect, as she also did not think any of the family members would want her.

The family has made the decision that they will find a family member willing to care for each of the children and that the grandmother will no longer bear the burden alone. I believe in this case, Family Group Decision Making was a wise choice and I am very glad to have had the opportunity to participate in it.

## Make an investment in the future by helping a child

**Maurice Portley** Superior Court Judge, Family Court Department

There is a child that needs you. The child is in foster care. She needs your help to navigate through the system. He needs your help to be his advocate. They need your advocacy. The child needs your example. The child needs your love.

The plight of all children in Arizona's foster care system is improving, but your help is still needed.

You may have heard or read about the Model Court process. The process requires Child Protective Services and the courts to expedite the system for parents after children have been removed due to abuse and neglect allegations. Instead of waiting for months for a meaningful hearing and services to help the family, a hearing has to be held within seven days after the child is removed. If the child can't be returned home, the judge has to resolve the issues of placement, visits and required services. The hope is that the parents will take the opportunity and address the problems that led to the removal so that the child can be returned. If they don't, the child can be made available for guardianship or adoption.

The process was evalu-

ated by the National Center for Juvenile Justice and demonstrated positive results.

Children are spending less time in placement and getting out of the child welfare system 43 percent faster than they did in 1996. In fact, 93 percent of the cases are being resolved within 18 months, as required by the Adoptions and Safe Families Act — a 30 percent increase over 1996.

The improvements have resulted in saving nearly a million dollars in Maricopa, Pima, Cochise and Coconino counties alone, and nearly \$5 million statewide. Arizona Supreme Court Justice Thomas Zlaket, Gov. Jane Hull, Sen. Ruth Solomon, Judge Nanette Warner, Janet Napolitano, the Maricopa County Model Court Implementing Committee and hundreds of others deserve the credit for their vision and hard work in implementing a key recommendation from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

The process was designed to save children. The fact that it also saves money in tough economic times and improves the child welfare system demonstrates that helping children and families should always be a priority.



During the same time period, John Clayton has quietly made improvements at CPS to try to keep children out of foster care. CPS asks relatives to step up to keep the child out of a foster home or get them out quickly. CPS also uses family conferencing; a process where all the family and extended family gets together to craft a family solution for the problems. CPS is also working with Value Options and community groups, such as the Casey Program, to find alternate ways to address substance abuse issues to help children and families. As a result, CPS is trying to help children and families stay out of the foster care system.

So, that's the good news. There are children that need your help.

You can help by being a good parent. You can help a relative in need. You can mentor to a child in the neighborhood. You can

become a foster parent.

You can join the Foster Care Review Board and help oversee some of the cases. Or, you can become a CASA — Court Appointed Special Advocate.

Like the Marines, CASA needs good people. You're needed to meet with a child, to advocate for the child, to argue with CPS, or a judge (politely, of course) about the child's best interest to help the child achieve some permanency and stability.

You will get the training. There is statewide training so that you will get a vision of the big picture. There is local training so you see the local needs and procedures.

And, then there's the on-the-job training with a child.

CASAs, past and present, like on-the-job training best because it has tangible results — a smile, a hug and knowing that you made a positive difference in the life of a child.

Please call La Donna Moss at 602-506-3930 for more information. Check out the website at [www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/casa](http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/casa). Your involvement will be a positive investment that will last for generations to come.

And that's really good news.

*Originally printed in the Feb. 12 edition of the East Valley Tribune.*

### Study, From Page 2

- Data revealed that out of a total of 1,538 CASA recommendations 90% were ordered by the court.

- Overall, CASA-involved children and families were ordered by the court to receive more services than non-CASA cases.

Please visit our web site at [www.supreme.state.az.us/casa](http://www.supreme.state.az.us/casa) for a copy of the Executive Summary.

We as staff have always been keenly aware of the time, your own resources, and the heart you give every day to the children you serve. But the study did not reflect the entire

picture because so much of the work you do could not be measured.

As county and state staff take a second look at our present reporting methods, we are focusing on two main areas: data collection, and training and mentoring.

#### Data collection

Developing and implementing methods of collecting the critical data now tracked in your contact log/journals and court reports. Your recommendations must always be given in writing at least twice a year. You may attend other hearings concerning your assigned case, but at critical reviews

these reports are vital. In addition, staff could assist you, if needed, in reporting your hours and miles by phone. You will hear more about this from your county coordinator.

#### Training and mentoring

Developing ways, in complex cases, to better support you and keep you in the program. This could include specific training and mentoring. During the study time frame, our recruitment efforts have gone well. Yet attrition continues to be a challenge. I am very excited about our future as a program and know we will all rise to the

occasion to continue to serve our children in the powerful way Maricopa County CASA volunteers have since the first volunteer was assigned in 1985. The focus then was getting the program and its concept established. That's been accomplished; we have the support and respect of judges and many other professionals with whom you interact. Most of all you touch the life of a child. Now you must make data collection equally important by documenting all the good work you do for the children fortunate enough to have a CASA volunteer.



## 2 dependency calendars temporarily moved

Beginning in February, Judge Alan Kamin and Judge William Sargeant started hearing dependency and severance calendars downtown in the Central Court Building, at 201 W. Jefferson. The judges will not be handling delinquency matters.

Judges Kamin and Sargeant took cases that were already assigned to them, as well as other cases that were reassigned from calendars of other Juvenile Court Judges to more evenly distribute the court's dependency calendar.

On Feb. 4, Judge Sargeant began hearing his dependency calendar in Courtroom 903. Beginning on Feb. 19, Judge Kamin's hearings are in Courtroom 1202.

As a CASA volunteer, this means that any case you had pending before Judges Kamin or Sargeant will now be heard at the Central Court Building in downtown Phoenix.

It is also possible that even if your case was not being heard by either of these judges, it may still be one of those that was reassigned from another

Juvenile Court Judge to downtown.

Your CASA Coordinator will make every effort to inform you of any changes of hearing locations, and our office staff will work to update hearing notices with the changes as well.

Parking can be a challenge when attending hearings downtown.

There are parking garages and lots in the vicinity with a range of parking fees. We appreciate your patience while adapting to this change.

## Local CASA story spread nationwide

Linda Warfield's CASA story is included in a book edited by the National CASA Association, with a forward by Anna Quindlen, titled Lighting the Way. The book is a compilation of 15 stories by CASA volunteers around the country, who discover that by speaking on behalf of abused children, they find their own voices as well.

Linda talks about her first experience as a CASA volunteer, and how many questions she had. Her first steps with the two children she chose to serve were tentative, but as she tells the story of working with the children and the system, she shows how her assurance grows. The story states that in many cases, the steps may be small, there may not always be great solutions and happy endings, but small victories can emerge. Thank you Linda, for being a voice for children, not only for those on your cases, but for all children, with this touching story.

## CASA Welcome

Maricopa County CASA Program is pleased to welcome our newest Coordinator, Bonnie Lodato. Originally from Attica, New York, Bonnie came to Arizona in 1961 and acclimated so well that she says she cannot imagine living anywhere else. She has five children and 12 grandchildren.

Bonnie comes to us with much experience in the victim assistance area, having worked both in the Attorney General's Office and, most recently, with the Glendale Police Department. She was a volunteer with Glendale Police Victim Assistance Program for seven years and was then hired to the staff. Her greatest satisfaction in working with

the victim's program was knowing that she "made life a little easier for people whose lives were in crisis."

We are sure that this same spirit will carry her through her work with her CASA volunteers. Please welcome Bonnie as a wonderful addition to the dedicated group of individuals who make up the CASA Program.

## Happy Birthday CASAs

2/02	Georgeanne Ford
	Adele James
	Barbara Beck
	Carole Singleton
2/07	Tricia Ruiz
2/09	Vera Corbin
	Janet Ofodile
2/11	Ozia Hasker
	Barbara Griswold
	Julie Lane

2/14	Peter Alper
	Gary Ireton
	Carol Scott
2/16	Victoria Konrath
2/17	Tawnya Smith
2/19	Judy Stratford
2/20	Juliet Nelson
	Carolina DeBoer
	Amy J. Besing
3/01	Amita Singhal
3/03	Frank Denz
3/10	Teri Werner

3/11	James Lee
3/15	Linda Anderson
3/19	Karen Rush
3/20	Hart gottliebson
3/22	Jaime Conkel
3/23	Daniel Miller
3/26	Georgi Gold
3/28	Margo Fitts
3/30	Kathleen Norton
	Elizabeth Osborn
	Richard Nardizzi
	Kathleen Mucerino

## Peer Group Meetings

**Scottsdale** - Last Wednesday of every month, Home of MaryLou Davis 1 p.m.

## East Valley Peer Group -

Third Thursday of every month, 6:30 p.m.- 8 p.m. Hosted by Greg Broberg.

## CASA Kudos

### From Court and staff:

**Juvenile Court Judge Thomas Dunevant** commended **Adele James** in court for her efforts and reports. The Guardian Ad Litem, **M. Anne Timmes**, also commended Adele and said the case was going nowhere until Adele became involved.

### From the Foster Care Review Board:

The FCRB commended the following CASAs for their continued commitment to the children on their cases:

- Teri Werner
- Laura Owsley
- Charlie Johnson
- June Anderson

### From CASA:

Congratulations to CASAs **Laura Malinasky** and **Jean Davis**. Both were awarded grants from their employers due to their volunteer efforts. The grants directly benefit the Arizona Council for CASA, and the CASA Program. Thank you.

### From CPS:

**Robert Bunson** recently received a Community Pride Award from **Janet Sabol** with Child Protective Services. Sabol commended Bunson saying "All the extra things that you do for the family involved in your case is truly appreciated. You make a difference."

# Recruiter's Corner

By La Donna Moss

Mark your calendars and save these dates for an exciting year!

The Maricopa County CASA Program is planning to hold its first community-wide Light of Hope Event. Each year the National CASA Program joins with CASA programs around the country to bring attention to the plight of foster children and their need for CASA volunteers. This event is to be held in April to coincide with National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month. Our event is tentatively planned in down-

town Phoenix, Saturday, April 6, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. We are calling our event "Celebrate the Light," after the national "Light of Hope" awareness campaign. Expect a day of fun, inspiring stories, entertainment from our multicultural community, games for the kids and snacks.

April is also the time we like to take time out to say a BIG "THANK YOU" to our CASA Volunteers. This year we would like to try something a little different. Instead of lunch, we would like you to

join us for brunch. The Recognition Brunch is set for Saturday, April 20, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the ASU Downtown Center.

Other events being planned this year include our CASA Kids Picnic in the fall. We also hope to hold the "Each One Reach One" recruitment event and are asking each CASA to bring one potential CASA Volunteer. More information on these events will be available as planning progresses.

As you might imagine, we have a lot to do, and we will need and welcome your assistance.

Help needed for "Celebrate the Light" includes:

- Setting up information and food booths prior to the event
- Breaking down tables, booths at close of event
- Serving snacks and beverages
- Preparing information packets and goodie bags for event attendees
- Donating strings of lights for a special display
- Guiding speakers and entertainment to stage
- Offering your special talents, ideas and energy to make the event a success

We look forward to a busy and exciting Spring, and all of you being an important part of it. Please call the CASA Office to let us know how you can help.

## FGDM, From Page 1

conference, and are they willing to attempt to work together for the sake of the child or children?"

There must be hope for the family, and family members must agree upon the meeting. This is often an all day and evening event, and can be somewhat costly, so it is imperative that the people invited are willing to participate.

Once the family is together at the meeting place, it is necessary to provide the proper tools to begin the discussion. To accomplish this, a representative of the Department of Economic Security serves as the leader of the

meeting.

To begin, the family and members of the team are encouraged to voice their issues and concerns for the child, or children. It is best to discuss concerns, not problems. Talking in terms of problems can make family members feel weak and helpless. The family then discusses strengths and concerns in a productive manner. This opens the floor and allows the family to derive solutions and an action plan regarding the children and their placement and services. Many times, family members who had previously not been involved with the children will "step up" and offer their

support.

The leader writes all the information on a blackboard or poster board for everyone present to view. The family then begins the large task of coming up with a PLAN. They are left in the room, without the leader, to work together. This gives them an opportunity to be directly involved in the planning without the need of an outside source deciding for them. This may take several hours to accomplish and it is recommended that meals and snacks be available.

Once the family has agreed upon a plan, the leader is invited to come back into the room to discuss what has been decided. It is important that

the plan be evaluated to insure that it is safe and workable for the child, or children.

Once the family has agreed upon all aspects of the plan, family members are encouraged to monitor what is happening. A future meeting is scheduled to evaluate what is working, and possibly what is not working and needs to be revised.

Life involves continual change, and the family is encouraged to go back to the drawing board to revise and improve the plan to meet new challenges.

It is important they come up with new and better plans to meet the challenges and achieve goals together.

## Judge Scott, From Page 1

do not believe that a group home or other placement should deny a CASA an offsite visit with a CASA child as a consequence for bad behavior. Frequently there are better and more effective ways to deal with behavior problems than interfering with the CASA's

interaction with the child. The CASA is not just the child's friend or support person. The CASA is an independent information gathering resource for the Court and it may be crucial to see and speak with the child away from the placement.

However, there are circumstances that occur when it is necessary to restrict a child to on site visits only.

This is especially true for a child who frequently runs away or who is very noncompliant and manipulative.

The judges encourage the CASA to speak with the caseworker if a placement unreasonably denies off site visits. If this does not resolve the issue, the CASA can make a written request, with notice to all parties, to the Court to allow the off site visit.

# CASA Contacts and Information

## Locations

## Program Staff

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